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## Viewing cable #06SANJOSE444, MORAL POWER: "ARIAS AND NATIONAL SECURITY"

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### Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cable's unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

### Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#06SANJOSE444**.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
<a href="#">06SANJOSE444</a>	<a href="#">2006-02-24 21:13</a>	<a href="#">2011-08-30 01:44</a>	<a href="#">CONFIDENTIAL</a>	<a href="#">Embassy San Jose</a>

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.nacion.com/2011-03-06/Investigacion/NotasDestacadas/Investigacion2702320.aspx>  
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-03-06/Investigacion/NotaPrincipal/Investigacion2702324.aspx>  
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-03-06/Investigacion/NotasSecundarias/Investigacion2702325.aspx>  
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-03-06/Investigacion/NotasSecundarias/Investigacion2702326.aspx>  
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-03-06/Investigacion/NotasSecundarias/Investigacion2702327.aspx>

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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 4367  
INFO RUEHZA/WHA CENTRAL AMERICAN COLLECTIVE  
RHMFIS/HQ USSOUTHCOM J1 MIAMI FL

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN JOSE 000444

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/16/2016  
TAGS: [PINS](#) [PREL](#) [MASS](#) [SNAR](#) [SMIG](#) [SOCI](#) [PBTS](#) [NI](#) [CS](#)  
SUBJECT: "MORAL POWER: " ARIAS AND NATIONAL SECURITY

REF: A. SAN JOSE 204

B. SAN JOSE 88  
C. 05 SAN JOSE 2909  
D. 05 SAN JOSE 2265

Classified By: DCM Russell Frisbie for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

Summary

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11. (C) National security in an Oscar Arias administration will be pursued at three levels: (1) Internationally, Arias will use his prestige as a Nobel laureate to be an advocate for multilateralism, international law, and disarmament. (2) At home the principal external security issues will be protection of Costa Rica's maritime zone, including from use by drug traffickers, and resolution of border and immigration problems with Nicaragua. (3) Internally, Arias will focus on crime prevention, police training, and streamlining the criminal justice system. Conspicuously absent from an Arias security strategy is any specific reference to civil unrest and the capacity of the police for dealing with it. We expect international issues to be handled personally by Arias himself, and his first vice president Laura Chinchilla to play a primary role in those security matters touching directly on Costa Rica. End summary.

Costa Rica as a "Moral Power" in the World

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12. (U) In his campaign for president, Oscar Arias urged Costa Ricans to "think big," to make their small country a "moral power" in the world and a voice for international law, human rights, multilateralism, and disarmament. He criticized the Pacheco administration for abandoning these principles, especially in supporting the "illegal war" in Iraq. According to the National Liberation Party (PLN) Program of Government 2006-2010, an Arias administration will oppose "the unacceptable and illegal doctrine of preemptive war" and will be an advocate for the enlargement and "effective democratization" of the UN Security Council to include permanent members from the developing world. (Note: The Pacheco administration has said that new "permanent" members should serve 8-year renewable terms.)

13. (C) Arias is a fervent supporter of the International Criminal Court (ICC) and has complained to us about USG "unilateralism" with regard to U.S. refusal to join the court or support certain landmine bans and nonproliferation initiatives. Arias has noted that Costa Rica contributed to the ICC's creation, and, in the words of the PLN Program of Government, its existence is "an extraordinary achievement of humanity and the beginning of the end of impunity for dictators and those who commit genocide and violate human rights."

14. (C) During the interregnum between his 1986-1990 presidency and his candidacy in the 2006 election, Arias used his status as a Nobel laureate to campaign for the abolition of national armies in Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa and for disarmament, focusing on conventional weapons (ref C). Arias has expressed to us his disappointment about the lack of U.S. support for his Arms Trade Treaty proposal. In his upcoming presidency Arias has told us he plans to launch a debt-forgiveness initiative designed to provide incentives for low and middle-income countries to reduce military spending (ref A).

Defending Costa Rica from External Threats

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15. (U) In a 2004 roundtable discussion on "Security Policies and Strategies for the 21st Century," Laura Chinchilla, a recognized expert on security and now Arias's running mate for first vice president, enumerated what she considers to be the main external threats to Costa Rica. First is the problem of drug trafficking (along with trafficking in arms and persons) in Costa Rican waters and across the land borders. Costa Rica, because it is a natural bridge between drug-producing and drug-consuming countries, has seen an increase in associated crimes, corruption, and local drug

consumption.

¶ 16. (C) A second problem area is the tension on the border with Nicaragua because of a dispute concerning Costa Rican navigational rights on the San Juan River (ref D) and Costa Rica's efforts to control Nicaraguan immigration. Arias has advocated a conciliatory approach to the San Juan River, but he has also expressed concern that in the event of a Sandinista victory in Nicaraguan elections, Nicaraguans will stream over the border to Costa Rica in numbers greater than ever.

¶ 17. (U) Finally, though perhaps not an "external" threat, is the problem of preventing and responding to natural disasters, such as earthquakes, volcano eruptions, and floods. Costa Rica's National Commission on Emergencies (CNE) has relied heavily on the Red Cross and the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) during recent floods. NASA's aerial mapping of the entire territory of Costa Rica and sampling of the atmosphere can be of great utility in planning to avoid or minimize the consequences of natural disasters.

¶ 18. (C) Chinchilla believes that multilateral and regional cooperation is essential for Costa Rica to cope with security threats. The illicit activities of international criminal organizations require an international response and close ties between the affected countries' police and judicial authorities. In Costa Rica, Chinchilla wants to "rejuvenate" the intelligence service, which is directly under the president, to make it "less secret and more analytical." This concern of Chinchilla's appears to be born of her oft-expressed distrust of security organs that are not under strict democratic political control. Chincilla was noncommittal at best in response to Embassy calls to make it easier for the police to conduct wiretaps. (Note: Current law requires a judge not only to authorize wiretapes, but to monitor them personally.)

#### Criminal Justice

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¶ 19. (U) Chinchilla has written numerous articles detailing her views on the need to reform the criminal justice system and improve crime prevention. As deputy, she worked on a thoroughgoing revision of the penal code which is still not complete. Her positions have been adopted by Arias and will inform the law enforcement policies of the Arias administration. Chinchilla emphasizes that it is not enough to crack down on international trafficking of drugs; there must also be a focus on the sale of drugs on street corners, parks, bars, and schools. Alcoholism is another serious threat to the nation's youth, and tough enforcement of laws must be combined with prevention and rehabilitation programs for alcoholics and drug users.

¶ 10. (U) In addition to the proliferation of drugs and firearms in Costa Rica, Chinchilla sees multiple other causes of crime, including growing economic inequality, violence in the media, an ineffective judicial system, and poorly trained police. She has also pointed out that the number of police in the country has not changed in the last three decades and that it is necessary to organize citizens to prevent crime in their communities. She has suggested the establishment of specialized police task forces for the identification and capture of habitual criminals who prey on citizens and are responsible for the lion's share of crimes.

¶ 11. (U) An overriding concern of Chinchilla's has been the "professionalization" and "demilitarization" of the police. Chinchilla has noted that the line between police and military and internal and external security is blurred in some Central American countries. Because of their inability to fight crime effectively, the governments of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras have used the armed forces to enhance police patrols for common criminals and gang members. In Chinchilla's opinion, the police function must be unambiguously civilian and police must be trained constantly to respect democratic values and the rule of law. Chinchilla

opposed the establishment of a U.S.-sponsored International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA) in Costa Rica because it would involve training some members of Latin American armed forces whom she believes are inappropriately carrying out police functions in their countries.

Civil Unrest

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¶12. (C) Civil unrest is a serious security problem in Costa Rica not because it occurs often, but because the fear of unrest thwarts governmental policies and programs. Because public sector trade unions threatened massive demonstrations against the U.S.-Central American-Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR), President Pacheco dallied 14 months before submitting the treaty to the Legislative Assembly for ratification. He kept a telecommunications bill bottled up permanently in his office because of his fear of a violent reaction by the telecom labor unions. Pacheco's Minister of Public Security constantly counseled the president against taking any actions that might anger the unions because he believed he could not handle strikes or civil disobedience on a large scale.

¶13. (C) An Arias administration will face even greater challenges than Pacheco has with regard to civil unrest. Because of his support for CAFTA-DR and other free-market reforms, Arias has already been branded enemy number one by the public sector labor unions. In April 2005, the so-called National Liaison Committee, which includes many unions, declared that it would not recognize the legitimacy of an eventual Arias presidency (05 San Jose 944). Further, prominent union leaders have chosen to interpret the lower-than-expected vote for Arias in the February 5 election as "a deafening defeat of the neoliberal oligarchy supporting CAFTA-DR" and have said that further action on treaty ratification and implementation in the Legislative Assembly would be "an extremely dangerous provocation" and result in "fiery" street confrontations (San Jose 331).

Comment

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¶14. (C) The security agenda of the incoming Arias administration does not deal directly with the issue of civil unrest. Chinchilla blithely condemns other Central Americans for "militarizing" their police and weakening the independence of the judiciary in order rein in dissidents. She does not, however, conceive of threats to the established order in Costa Rica or detail methods of control. This appears to be an important void in the stated Arias security strategy.

¶15. (C) The other gap in the strategy concerns the lack of resources, exacerbated by the rejection of ILEA and refusal to sign an Article 98 agreement. Arias had unrealistic expectations as to possible U.S. assistance in his administration, which we have tried to dampen. Instead of hoping for outside material assistance, the Arias administration would do well to plan an effective national security strategy that might include reconsideration of current policies (e.g., on wiretaps) that encourage passivity on the part of the country's police and intelligence services.

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